

"OTHER DAYS AND OTHER WAYS"

Being the early history of Alhambra.

By

John R. Kerr.

Still o'er these scenes my memory wakes..

And fondly broods with miser care;

Time but the impression stronger makes,

As streams their channels deeper wear.

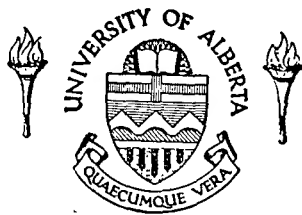
- R. Burns.

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John R Kerr

July 19th 1932

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THE HOMESTEADER

Going to take a Homestead? Going to take up land?
Well, sartinly you're wise my son,
I think the notion's grand.
When I look back to them old days
Way back in early 89
When I first went a homesteadin' - I think the notion's fine!
If I was young and strong agin I'd quit this plaguey town,
An' come along with you, my son, an help to hold 'er down.

I started out that winter with a stove and meoley cow,
A team of western branches and an old long handled plough.
An' I broke a little tater patch and fenced it round with rails,
Tying the posts with willow withes, we didn't have no nails.
And I built a sed roofed shack, and turned some more black loam,
Till there warn't a place on God's green earth
Looked half so much like home.

The town was eighty miles away and the mail came once a week,
When the mailman didn't stick his team in a mud-hole
In the creek.
For ther wasn't any bridges an' the trail just wound about,
Among the sloughs and meadows, a-twistin'in and out,
From neighbors shack to neighbors shack
And past the school house deer, an' by the local blacksmith shop
And the little country store.

And hay there was a-plenty and weed and water too
And all we had to think about was the work we had to do.
And pleasant-like the days slipped by
And soon fall came around,
And we had to finish threshing with the snow upon the ground,
And then we'd get the bob-sleighs out
And every blessed chance, we'd gather at a neighbors house
And have a bully dance.

So year by year the seasons came and found us better fixed
Being content to plug along, with work and pleasure mixed.
We put no mortgage on the farm and had no debts to pay -
Just made enough to live upon, enough to pay our way.
And if by chance a man took sick, or some bad fortune came
We all chipped in and helped him out till he was well again.

But now they tell me life down there ain't what it used to be,
With wages up to five a day and wheat two-twenty-three,
And felks all fussing round in cars and using telephones,
And a town with Banks and picture shows and real estates and loans.
And agents coming round to sell insurance and such truck,
I guess if I went homesteadin' I'd sure be out of luck.

So son, I guess I'll change my mind and stay right where I be,
Until I stake that other claim that comes to you and me,
Where I can lie and be at rest, beneath the seds once more
Just as we did 'neath the sed-roofed shack,
In the good old days of yore,
The time I went a homesteading,
With a stove and Meoley cow,
A team of western branches,
And an old long handled plough.

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This poem was clipped from the Family Herald and Weekly Star Nov. 3, 1920.

Chapter 1

Township 39, range 5, West of the fifth meridian was not completely surveyed until 1906 and it was not until years after this that the district of which I write (Alhambra District) was named.

I doubt if there was any place names west of Eckville or Evarts, except perhaps Leslieville. It was generally allowed at that time that the country alongside and west of Herseguard Creek was a no-good Tamarack swamp and muskeg that never would be any good for farming and anyone who was fool hardy enough to take up a homestead there was to be pitied indeed. No wonder, for a lot of the wise men who lived further east and had been in the country a few years knew that it froze every night of the year, and what would be the use of anyone going into a country like that?

However, the man at that time was "go west young man and grow up with the country" so in March 1906 along came the Byram family, our first settlers and straight from Yorkshire, Eng. Glass bottle blowers by trade in England, they knew absolutely nothing about farming, and like many others who came from big towns and cities in the old country, they had it all to learn from the well known teacher - experience.

About that time the stories about the green Englishman went the rounds like the common cold. The late Bob Edwards and the Calgary Eye - Opener kept a lot of them in circulation but gradually the green Englishman ripened and the stories about them died out.

Byram brothers in later years got to be very successful farmers and could well afford to laugh and joke about the amusing mistakes they made at first. Agricultural experiences in other countries did not always count for success in this new country where climate and conditions were so different and the greenhorn who had courage, common sense and determination coupled with a good sense of humour often made very successful settlers. I must remember, however, that this is an attempt to write the history of Alhambra district and not to moralize on the traits of the early settlers.

It was only a few years after the arrival of our first settlers until all the free homestead land in our neighborhood had been taken up. People were flocking into the west. All kinds and classes of them, and our district got its full quota of kinds and varieties, but the majority of them spoke English - with variations, of course!

Here is a list of the names of the settlers and the years in which they arrived.

After Byrams came Tom Butler, Griff and Jack Jones, the Helga Lund family and Iver and Ole Lund came with their families that year and took up land in township 38, now known as the Herseguard.

The Olson and Petersen families came shortly after and homesteaded beside them. I believe they were the first pioneer families in that district.

In 1907 Dan Sutherland, Alex McQueen and Donald Tolmie took homesteads on section 6, township 39. Jack Davies filed on his place and here are the names of some of the settlers as I remember them when I came in 1908.

Jim Scott, William Cooper, Harry Weller, Mrs. Walker, Mr. and Mrs. McClure, E. Roberts. Early in 1909 Mr. Patterson and his son Frank took up land. The hamlet of Alhambra is located on what was Mr. Patterson's homestead. But more about Alhambra later.

The Reyner brothers, Gust and Austin had land along the bank of the Herseguard and were among the first to settle there.

Bill Farquharson, shortly after Charlie Farquharson, Andy Lennan and I believe, the Pollit family, father and two sons Jack and Tom, took up land and came in the summer of 1909 and by 1910 Gust Nylander. William Cruickshank came about that time and shortly after came the Maxwell and Miller families, the E.G. Larsen and Cochrane family. The Begne's the Askerbergs, and the Braithwaits, the Pells, and Joe Barbie and W.J. Little came that year also the Luyckfassels, though by that time (1911) most of the free land had been taken up.

For some years before our first settlers came, the Alberta Central Railway Co. had a charter to build a railway west of Red Deer but nothing had been done about it, but since the charter had been renewed rumours of a railway and where it could go through were the common topic of conversation at that time. One thing we were all agreed on and that was that the railway would have to be built along the ridges - so thought the homesteaders, but the Engineers when building the road thought quite different and in lots of places it is built across deep muskeg.

There was great excitement among the settlers when it became known that a survey party was working west from Red Deer and when a straight line of surveyors stakes was run across my homestead in 1909 the railway was practically assured us. The Railway Co., paid the huge sum of ten dollars an acre for the right of way, but so delighted were we at the prospect of the railway that they could have had it for nothing at that time.

Prospects of the railway brought other settlers into the west country surrounding us. Mr. L. Cooper came in 1909, also the Walsh brothers, Bob and George and about the same time came the MacDonald family, A.L. MacDonald, well known among the Scottish people as "the Chief". The Von Hellen families, Fred, Herman, Carl and shortly afterwards Henry, came from across the border and settled south of Alhambra a few miles. Very few of the settlers who came into the district had money enough to fit themselves out with farm stock and implements. In the first years horses that were brought into the district did not do well, the disease known as swamp fever was very prevalent then and there seemed to be no cure for it.

A yoke of oxen was considered the best bet and a lot of the land was broken with oxen the first few years.

I broke quite a lot of land with two oxen and a twelve inch walking plow. I later had four head and after that in 1913 had a good outfit of two horses and two oxen on a Cockshutt breaker plow.

I had a few acres of oats to cut for green feed in 1911. Not having a mower of my own I got my neighbor, William Farquharson, to cut it for me with his new Frest & Wood mower. The mower was OK but the team could be described as "not so hot". One horse, Tony was a fair size but the little mare, Gracie, was too small for such heavy work as drawing a mower. However, one of my team of oxen could walk up like a horse so I got my first crop cut with a horse and an ox hitched to a mower.

We did not have much of this world's goods in those days but we always seemed to have something to laugh and joke about.

Except for a few small patches of cropped land there were no fences and so on Sunday holidays and stormy days the oxen used to stray to visit the neighbors and generally get acquainted with the neighborhood for miles around. They would stay around and lick salt all day Sunday and perhaps be three miles from home on Monday morning.

Some amusing stories can be told about hunting oxen. One worthy declared that the ox with the bell on would lay down in the thick bush and the others would carry grass to him so the bell would not be heard.

Hard times, long winters and a scarcity of feed had taught them all the tricks of fence breaking when there was a stack of slough hay or green feed handy. Patterson brothers liked to tell about finding, after a long search, one of their oxen in Frank Hall's house. Frank had gone on one of his periodical visits to Evarts. The ox had barged into the house to get away from flies and the door had swung shut behind him and he could not get out again. Frank was an aristocratic kind of a bachelor and had some nice chairs, a couch and even some linoleum on the floor. Well, the description of the shack after the ox had been in there for some time had better be imagined than described, - and so had the remarks of the owner as he proceeded to clean up the mess. I remember another instance where one of Mr. Emmerson's oxen disappeared for several days and was finally found in an abandoned shack. The ox had gone inside to get away from the flies and had broken through the floor into the cellar. There is no doubt but that the animal would have starved to death had it not been found in time.

The oxen were slow but could travel a long way in a long time, some were slower than others. The following story might illustrate this. The first time my neighbor William Farquharson (an experienced ox driver) rode into Red Deer in a car he remarked to the driver when they got near Sylvan Lake, "Well its a lot quicker. When I drove oxen into Red Deer I could see the lake for two days before I got to it." Personally, I think he might have been exaggerating slightly, he probably saw the lake one day before he got to it and one day after he left it.

One had to have a lot of patience to drive oxen and there was a certain amount of healthy exercise connected with it if one were at all ambitious about getting anywhere. A story is told of the old chap who got completely exasperated with the slow speed his oxen were making. All his talking and whipping seemed to be in vain, so he stopped and addressed them thus,

"Look here you two old sons 'o' guns, if you can't do any better than this I'll take the braces off your horns and bring ye down to the level of the common cow!" It is doubtful however, if such dire threats made any difference.

The only time the ox would get into high gear was when the heel flies were after him, and I know from experience that they were dangerous cattle to be mixed up with when that happened.

They would make for the nearest slough or water hole with their tails in the air, dragging with them whatever implements they happened to be hitched to. Well, the ox served its day and generation as a draught animal, a beast of burden and usually finished up by supplying big tough beef steaks for the lumber jacks in the logging camps.

In the "proving up" process of a homestead the aspiring land owner usually arrived with a grub steak sufficient to last several months at a time but despite his best efforts to make supplies eke out there was always some necessities such as tobacco, matches, beans or syrup running out. In this event a trip to Evarts had to be undertaken. It was courteous and proper to inform the neighbors that such a trip was contemplated so that you could collect the outgoing letters and get a list of their requirements from the store.

When our neighbors went they did the same for us and brought out the mail. Thus was built up a very friendly intercourse with the early settlers and in this way we got to know people for quite a long way around us.

Many and varied were the experiences that could be told about the long bad roads and mud holes that had to be encountered on the way to the nearest store, or on a trip to the town of Red Deer. One of the best stories relating to the times and conditions was told me by Tom Peel, who homesteaded some miles south east of Alhambra in 1906. The summer of 1907 was very wet; They say it rained 26 days in June that year.

Mr. Peel had sold two young pigs to a man who lived about two miles east of Evarts, about twenty miles away, so one bright morning he started out with ox team and wagon to deliver the goods. All went well 'till he got to Emberling's Creek, just west of the road into Cander. Here the culvert became unsafe with the recent heavy rains, and he had a very difficult time getting across, so much that he thought it best to leave the oxen in Mr. Emberley's pasture for a day or two until conditions improved. Mr. Emberley kindly agreed to keep the oxen for an indefinite period but he had no feed for pigs, so Mr. Peel put them into a sack and carried them the four miles back home again. About a week later, when conditions had somewhat improved, he started out with the pigs in the sack again and in due time caught up with the oxen, hitched them to the wagon and climbed in beside the pigs in the wagon box and proceeded toward Evarts at the regular speed of two miles per hour. Towards evening he arrived on the bank of the Medicine River opposite Evarts.

Here was a fine how - do - you - do. The river was in flood and it was quite impossible to get over the bridge. However, an enterprising fellow had a boat and was in business as a ferry man carrying people across for a modest consideration. Obviously, the best thing for Mr. Peel could do was to take the ferry. So after making a sporting agreement with the ferry man in which he would agree to wait for the ferry fee until he had got paid for the pigs and was on the homeward journey he disposed of the oxen by putting them into a fenced pasture. He duly arrived on the east side of the river and still had two miles to go. It was getting late by this time and being tired, hungry and generally disgruntled, he eagerly enough accepted the kind invitation of a farmer friend, whose place he was passing, to "come in and have supper with us".

Where would be the best place to put the pigs? A wagon with a grain box was standing in the yard, so the pigs were put in there till the requirements of the inner man had been attended to.

Perfired with a good meal, Mr. Peel felt that he would have no difficulty in getting to the end of his journey now, so with many thanks to his friend for his hospitality he reached into the wagon box for the sack with the pigs in it but much to his surprise the pigs were not there. They had not only got out of the sack but had also got out of the wagon box, and after much searching and canning the landscape they were located about a mile away in the direction from which they had come. One has to hear this story by Mr. Peel himself to get the full flavour of it. The tale of how they chased and caught them, the small price he got for them! what he bought with the three dollars at Robinson's store, how much he paid the ferry man and his comparison and comments on the hog prices then and now all make for a first class pioneer story.

Jack Pollit likes to tell of his experiences in buying a yoke of unbroken steers at the Calgary stock yard; of the time they had breaking them in and about punching them all the way from Calgary to their homestead northwest of Alhamra. of horses

Most of the settlers who came from the States had some sort of outfit, and general farm effects, others who had no money to buy horses or oxen came to prove up the homestead on foot from Evarts which was the end of the stage route, and would perhaps get a neighbor with a team to haul in their grub stake and effects.

For the information of those who in years to come might read these lines I might explain about proving up a homestead. For a fee of ten dollars any man could file on a homestead, a hundred and sixty acres more or less, and by complying with the homestead regulation over a period of three years, could at the end of that time apply for the title deed. A homesteader was expected to have thirty acres in cultivation. He had to live six months of each three years on the place. He was expected to have a house worth at least three hundred dollars and a certain amount of fencing and other improvements done before applying for a patent or deed for the land. Sometimes, it was allowed that the homesteader acres were a bit smaller than regularly were allowed. However, for the most part the early settler earned the title to his place by the sweat of his brow and the strength of his arm.

This part of the country was wet in these early times and there was not much difficulty in getting a plentiful supply of water. A neighbor of mine dug a deep well, twelve feet, in winter and the following spring he told me he had fourteen feet of water in it!

Mr. Robert Smith and the family came to the district in 1912. He had been well used to rain and wet weather, having farmed for many years in Scotland. The two older boys had come to this country the year before to make some preparations for the arrival of the rest of the family. There was a lot of freighting in consequence of the railway being under construction at that time and with the prolonged wet weather and heavy traffic the roads were completely cut to pieces and on many of the worst places a detour around and through bush, willows and ant hills had to be made. Some such place was being negotiated by the Smith family, with Mrs. Smith and wee Wull (two years old) on the wagon seat beside the driver. There was a particularly bad place ahead, the team jumped, a wheel hit a stump, Mrs. Smith and the little fellow left the seat and landed with a splash in a big muddy pool of slough water. Fortunately, there was more discomfort than damage done, and after retiring to the thick brush to effect a change of clothing, they were all able to resume the journey. It can well be imagined, however, that Mrs. Smith did not readily forget this experience and years passed before she could be persuaded to travel, in any kind of vehicle whatever, over that awful road again. When Mr. Smith saw so much water and wet land around this place they had come to he was seen to shake his head and heard to express the opinion that "when its like that now it must be hellish wet in the winter".

Those who had been in the district for a winter knew that he was completely mistaken, the winter time was the only time it was dry. It froze dry.

Some of the statements made by the old -timers about the roads or particular places on the roads, were descriptive if not exactly truthful. Such as "man that place is so bad it would bog a geese or float an egg, I'm getting to be web-footed since I came here".

Hay wire, an axe and a logging chain were standard equipment in the wagon box when on the trail. It was no use trying to haul big loads over such roads and sometimes the load did not weigh very much at all. I knew one old timer who got his team and wagon bogged down on one of the choicest spots on the trail. Well a neighbor happened to come along and by hooking both teams on they were able to get it out on the on the high land. The neighbor remarked that "it took the combined efforts of both teams and men to get that thing out of there. It was a heavy pull". "Well its no wonder" said the old timer seriously but with a twinkle in his eye, "it is no wonder it took such a pull to get it out, just look at the load I got on". So the neighbor looked and in the wagon box all he could see was a setting of duck eggs!

There was some amazing and at times laughable instances (occasioned often through the ignorance of the right way to do things.

Two of our early settlers direct from England were proceeding to cut down some nice green, heavy poplar trees to build a shack. They had worked hard and had successfully beavered a number of trees which were lying criss-cross all over the place. An elderly neighbor happened to come along. He had heard someone chopping and had come over to see what was going on. The neighbor, I might explain, was an Ontario man and a past master with an axe. No doubt he chuckled to himself when he saw how they were doing. He, being a fine friendly kind of a person ventured very cautiously to give the newcomers a little advice without giving offence. The upshot of it was that he took them over to a fine dry patch of spruce where they could get logs more suited for their purpose and easier to handle, wishing to show them how to chop properly he took an axe from one of the men with a remark about seeing if this tree was sound. After looking which way the tree was leaning he undercut it by chopping a deep notch, then he changed hands and chopped from the other side, meantime the young fellow whose axe he was using was standing there observing every move he made, only he would stand right in the place where the tree would be likely to fall, so the old gentleman advised him to stand to the other side where he would be out of harms way. The English lad, anxious to learn, ask why it was best to stand to the side instead of in front. His neighbor explained that the tree was going to fall where he was standing, whereupon the English lad exclaimed, "Oh I see how you do it. When we cut down trees we chop all around until we think they are going to fall then we run like Hell".

I have heard my friend Mr. Tom Peel tell this story, since he was one of the green Englishmen, and he also expresses his great regard for the kindly diplomatic way in which his neighbor, the late Mr. Blair (David Blairs father) showed them how to chop and fell timber in 1906.

One of our early settlers had a team of horses and one day he was out on the trail with a load of groceries, one of the horses was a lot smaller than the other. Well, the story goes that he met a more experienced neighbor and since the team and especially the smaller horse was badly winded, he was quite eager to rest the team and talk a while. The neighbor soon saw that it was not fair to expect the small horse to pull as much as the big one and made the suggestion that he might give the little horse some advantage on the evener. Indeed he went to the house, got a brace and bit and bored a hole, gave the small horse the long end of the evener and the young Englishman went away, pleased and rejoicing. However, some time later the same team and teamster were seen on the trail and this time he had the small horse on the short end of the evener and someone drawing his attention to the matter he exclaimed in broad Yorkshire dialect "Oh, a'know. whats append, a have got wrong horses on wrong side of teague the day".

A lot of settlers in our neighborhood had little or no equipment and went to Calgary to work in the summer, returning to put in their residence on their land in winter when work was slack in the city. In such cases they would plan on getting a neighbor to break up and cultivate their land. Those who stayed on their homestead in summer were only too glad to earn a little money in this way. In winter there was some work to be had in logging camps and saw mills. Bob Graham had a saw mill on the S. E. quarter of 16-35 in the winter of 1906-07. This was a very severe winter in Western Canada and many tales are told of the thousands of cattle and horses that perished for lack of feed. There was little or no stock in our district then, but I have heard men say who worked at Bob Grahams mill, that the coyotes were so weak and poor they were reduced to eating the horse manure on the sleigh tracks.

Those who worked at Bob Grahams mill took their wages out in lumber and very rough stuff it was. Good logs were to be had in abundance in the early years, but for the most part the small mills turned out pretty rough stuff, but at least it was strong. McDougal and Martin had a good sized mill some miles north of us. Then there was the McKechnie mill and Frank Pettipher's mill south of Alhambra.

The Great West Lumber Co. of Red Deer, employed a lot of men in their camps west of Olds and also at their mills in Red Deer during the summer. Mr. H. Stockwell was also one of the pioneer saw-mill men.

Mr. Frank Pettipher was one of the first men to drive a motor car through this part of the country. William Wallace was another pioneer with a car, and it was surprising to the rest of us how these men could get around on such rough and boggy trails. Often we had to help them through with horses or axen.

In the first years there was not much sale for butter and about 1909 Mr. T.B. Millar built and operated a cheese factory at Pitcox.

The milk had to be hauled over long distances in some instances, and when work for wages was to be had on the railway grade the milk supply dwindled and the project had to be abandoned. Mr. Millar was one of these kindly men who tried to do his very best for the settlement out west and for his effort got little credit and no profit from his enterprise.

Work was commenced on building the Alberta Central Railway in the summer of 1909. A grand ceremony was staged at Red Deer when the then Prime Minister, Sir Wilfred Laurier drove the first spike.

Camps were established at different points along the route between Red Deer and Rocky Mountain House, and the settlers sold their cows to the camp for beef and went to work on the building of the railway grade, with their teams or without. The whole district west began to prosper. Different townsites were plotted and established along the route, including our particular place, Alhambra. There is good reason to believe that Alhambra was named by the president of the Alberta Central Railway, Mr. John T. Moore. We might quite well suppose that Mr. Moore, connecting his own family name with ancient Moores and their palace of splendor in Spain, the Alhambra, suggested the name. Thus we have Alhambra in Alberta, about sixteen miles east of Rocky Mountain House and forty miles west of Red Deer. It was for the most part of the heavily wooded district and it was hard work and a slow job to clear up and bring such land under cultivation.

After the railway was completed in 1914 a good many of the settlers made their living by shipping out posts, props, lumber and firewood. A big business was carried on from this point for a number of years. Good building logs were to be had in those days and with a little money and a lot of work a shack, a house or a barn could be built. At first a man had to make shift with such simple tools as a saw and an axe. I know from experience it was a trying job to cut out the logs in a wall for a doorway when the only saw at hand was a bucksaw. It is no wonder that some of the first shacks were pretty crude affairs, and were very hard to keep warm in severe weather. These shacks were usually chinked between the logs with moss or mud and the squirrels would dig out the moss so they could help themselves to anything they might fancy inside.

The homesteaders were nothing if not resourceful however, and when some extra warmth was required when making bread, a coal oil lantern in a nail keg, turned low, the bread pan on top and well covered over with horse blankets and - well, if the dough did not rise good with all that care it must have been a poor yeast cake, but light or heavy it was eaten anyway. We could not afford to waste anything.

I believe the first crop of grain which was grown and harvested was on the N.W. $\frac{1}{4}$ of sec. 10-39-55. It was a small patch and Mr. H. Stockwell had agreed with the owner to put in that crop in the spring of 1907. When spring came he found that he could not do it himself so he got Tom Peel to crop the land, Mr. Stockwell supplying the seed. Mr. Emberly kindly lent his disk and Mr. French his drag harrows. Tom Peel provided the ox power and his own work. The crop was cut with Mr. Stockwell's cradle. About two years later I remember helping Percy Byram cut a few acres of rye with this same implement.

When the crop was sown in the spring the most that we could hope for was green feed in the fall. One of my neighbors with a sense of humour used to ask us "what will the harvest be like this fall?" and promptly answer his own question by hurriedly saying, "green feed". Some oats for seed were cut by sickle, cradle and mower, tied in sheaves by hand and flailed out for seed in the winter time.

In 1912 L. Cooper, P. Byram, and Mr. Simmons bought a small Moodey separator and had a horse power sweep. The machine had to be hand fed and there was a straw conveyer on it. Unfortunately, the horse power arrangement gave a lot of trouble and was forever breaking down. Finally Ernie Kirk with his seven horse power portable gasoline engine took over in place of the horse power and this outfit did quite a lot of threshing in the neighborhood. The crops were usually stacked and threshing was prolonged well into winter.

Anyone who has worked around a threshing machine will admit that there is no easy job to be had on the outfit when the machine is running right. Threshing then as now was a hungry job and everybody on the crew had good appetites. One young fellow remarked as he sat down to an enormous plate full of food that his mother was a long eater and his father was a big eater and he took after them both. Prairie chickens, partridges and rabbits, which fortunately, were plentiful then, had to be provided in abundance when the threshers were coming. If the threshers got prairie chicken and partridge at one place they would most likely get a change when they got to the next place - They would likely get partridges and prairie chicken there. The game laws were often ignored at threshing time.

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In the first years on the homestead there was no mailday days or hog shipping days, as now, to remind one of the days of the week. Though the Sabbath Day was observed by most people. However, some heated arguments developed when neighbors met about what day of the week it was. It was excusable and not uncommon for one to slip over one day of the week.

I remembers two of my neighbors who went visiting friends that lived some distance away. They started out on foot on Sunday morning by their reckoning, and arrived at their friends place on Tuesday afternoon. Apparently, it had taken them two days to walk the few miles or their calculations about what day of the week it was was completely haywire, as we used to say. The first summer I was on the Homestead I had neither watch nor calander but that did not deter me from arguing about the time of day or day of the week or day of the month. Hyams place was a rendezvous for the bachelors on Sundays, where news and perhaps mail, might be collected, Homesteaders problems, in all respects were aired and discussed. For instance, the best way to find the quarter lines, the best and cheapest way to make a rail fence, whether the cutlines running north were twenty-six or twenty-six and a half degrees west of north, the best substitute for tobacco, Some recommended dried tea leaves, others cin-ac-nic chicken berry leaves, bog bean, raspberry leaves and the breadleaved plant (elephants ear) found in slough hay. All these had been tried when real tobacco was not to be had. There were not so many cigarette smokers in those days. McDonalds brier plug and Pay-Relle Chewing tobacco were in common use about that time. Oh yes, there were some who chewed Copenhagen and there was the thrifty type who economized by using natural leaf, often fixed up in some special way, the recipe known only to himself alone.

There was an abundance of game in this district. Partridge, prairie chicken, spruce hens and brush rabbits were very plentiful some years. Deer and moose were fairly plentiful but with the coming of the homesteader the big game took to the more rough and remote parts of the district. Wild strawberry, black currants, saskateons, cranberries both high and low and last but perhaps the most important of them all the low bush blueberry. This delicious berry is fast disappearing in this district.

It was generally allowed that homesteaders could work hard and clear a lot of land on a diet of boiled, stewed, fried, roasted and broiled rabbit and blueberry jam. Certain it was that we all made what use we could of these natural resources. Wild flowers were far from plentiful then than now, they too are disappearing with the trees. Black bears were fairly common here for the first few years after the settlers and stories of their depredations were not uncommon. A marauding bear paid a visit to my neighbors shack when he was out. It was dark when he got home and the bear was busy tearing the roof off the shack. The bear had apparently been particularly annoyed with the stove pipe and the roof jack. These things looked as if they had been through a thrashing machine. Jim Scott the man whose property was so damaged, myself and an experienced bear hunter Bob Graham, set a trap and waited up all night following the performance. Patterson brothers shot a black bear which was raiding their tent for food, that was near where the Searle elevator now stands. I have already stated that the early settlers were nothing if not resourceful. And this also applied to medical remedies when man or beast got sick. It is interesting to recall that standard remedies, like fashion in clothes, change with the years. Cough syrup, Pain-killer, Zam Buck for cuts and burns, Mether Seigals Syrup for a tonic pick-me-up and a quantity of Epsom Salts, useful medicine for man or beast. Fortunately, the first settlers seemed to be very healthy, but some strange concoctions might be forthcoming when man or beast got sick.

I have heard Mrs. Jack Jones tell about a land seeker who camped near them one time. One of his team of horses took sick and the men folk diagnosed it as water colic and there was no remedy at hand for that. Mrs. Jones remembered, however, that there was a box of gin pills in the house, which she readily produced. They pried the animals mouth open, threw in the pills and in a short time he was alright again. The land-seeker you may be sure, was greatly relieved to have his horse well again and he showed his appreciation by leaving them a nice pail of honey before resuming his journey.

Early in 1910 MacDermell brothers and Pierce opened a store and post office about nine miles east of us and about one and a half miles south west of Hespero. The new Post Office was called Pitcox after the MacDermell home place in Scotland. The firm did a big business in all kinds of general merchandise and farm implements for a number of years and later moved their store to the townsite of Hespero. The Pitcox store was a great convenience to the settlers west who had previously get their mail at Evarts. It was now comparatively easy to get to the store and Post Office. All their goods had to be hauled in from Red Deer by team over bad roads and very often in wet weather the flour and sugar and other supplies often got wet, damaged and dirty but none grumbled about it.

It used to be said that we each had to eat a peck of dirt anyway and that bachelors and homesteaders ate a bushel. There was a story about a bachelor who made butter for himself, the surplus, if any, he sold to his neighbors who were also bachelors. Well, one Sunday afternoon, such customers called on the buttermaker for their weekly supply. It transpired that the aspiring dairyman had some bad luck with the last batch, it was still in the churn which was the end over end type.

He had churned and churned for hours, got fed up, left it until the next day, churned and churned again with no better results. Butter was there but it would not separate from the buttermilk. Evidence of his desperate efforts in churning were plain to be seen on the floor and walls of the shack. It would appear that the cows had eaten too heartily of mint, which is quite common in sough grass hay. The wood had tainted the cream and the conclusion was that it would be quite useless to separate the butter by churning. The resourcefulness of the homesteader was well exemplified again and the problem of separating the butter from the buttermilk was preceeded with on the spot. There was a clothes mangle in the shack which the family had imported from England, a huge machine with springs and gears like a John Deere tractor. The rollers were wide and thick, and made of hard, heavy wood. It was a simple matter to bail the contents of the churn into a cotton sugar sack, adjust the spring of the mangle to the proper tension, feed the sack with the contents through the rollers. Result, the buttermilk was separated from the butter all right but we still have the problem of separating the butter from the sugar sack. We could hardly claim to have first grade butter that time but we were able to use some of it, we certainly could not afford to waste things!

Chapters might, and have, been written about bachelors and their cooking. One good friend of mine got up early one morning and filled up the kettle before lighting the lamp. Later in the day he went to fill up the teapot and something appeared to be filling up the spout of the kettle, a closer investigation revealed the body of a boiled mouse had got jammed in the spout. We had heard of beef tea but mouse tea was something new even on the homestead.

The building of the Central Alberta Railway was spread over four years and it was the twenty second of August 1914 when the first passenger train came from Red Deer. The hamlet of Alhambra began to grow. Mr. Adams moved a building from his farm and opened a store. He was the first Post Master. Mr. Perry built a two storey log stopping house. It was fashioned of dry wind fall logs with moss stuffed in between and was roofed with poles, moss and tarpaper. I remember a young teacher coming to teach at Alhambra school. When she was shown her quarters at the stopping house she point blank refused to stay there, so she stayed with the Bogne family for a time. The Bogne place was too far from the school house however, and she later made a deal with Ruby the land lady of the stopping house, to occupy the veranda which was being enclosed with new lumber. So Miss White and Alma Olson batched it there for the remainder of the term.

Alhambra school district was organized in 1912 but it was not until 1914 that a school was opened in a temporary log house a mile south of the hamlet. Mrs. Ralph Patterson was the first teacher. She boarded with us on school days, my wife looking after young Len, aged ten months. On week ends they went back to their own home three miles off. Messers Bogne, Larson, Byram and Kerr formed the school board then. School-room howlers were common then too. One young boy had a seat near the window and was perhaps more interested in things outside the school than in it; he informed the teacher "here comes another kid" - the teacher corrected him - "you mustn't say "kid", you must say "child", so profiting by this lesson he announced the next arrival thus "Please teacher, heres two childs coming". It was not until 1916 that the new school was opened. Mrs. H. Brown now of Norwich, England, was the first teacher. The school house was now the centre of our social and community life. Parties, dances and religious services were all held in the school. There were no organized orchestras then, but we could trip the light fantastic to music by Mrs. Chas. Smith on the organ and Jock MacDonnell on the violin and if they were not available we could always call on George Chisholm, Bill Cruickshank, some members of the Cochran family perhaps or the youthful Albert Miller with his mouth organ.

Some of the dances then were the half step, two step, three step, four step, seven step, french minuet, sour kraut square dances and waltzes.

One young lady was often the Belle of the ball on these occasions and asked one of her bachelor friends the day after the dance, why he had not asked her to dance. He, wishing to pay the lass a compliment told her that he would have liked to dance with her all right but the rest of the young fellows were crowding around her like flies around a piece of bad meat! This story would seem to bear out the assertion that Yorkshire men are notorious for their back handed compliments. At any rate he remained a bachelor.

The Great War was already taking its toll from every district in Canada and ours was no exception. I would like to record here the names of those brave fellows who left this district and served overseas at the call of King and Country. Some returned not much the worse for their terrible experience, some returned wounded and in poor health and some found soldiers graves in Flanders Fields. The names of the men given below were not all from this neighborhood.

Len Patterson - Wounded
W. J. Little - killed
J. Rooke
J. McBeth
J. Leslie -

W. E. Goold
F. J. Patterson
C. Smith
D. Blair
J. W. Cochran M.M. and D.C.M.

Wm. Cochran	T. Pollitt
H. Hicks - Killed in action	A. Goold
T. Byram - Wounded	H. Remond
P. Luyckfassel	J. Smith-Canadian Navy
E. Hart	Fritz Von Hollen
R. Miller	C. Lachmund
N. Eastman	N. MacDonald
W. Stockwell	D. Fagg - Wounded
W. McLellan - Killed	J. Mitchell - Won M.M.
L. Patterson - Killed	Bert Avery
J. MacDonald - Died of wounds.	R. Speedie
W. R. Walsh - Gassed	

An honour roll of these names should have been made and preserved for posterity. I recall that there was some suggestion made to this affect, but it was left to George to do it and as usual George never got around to it.

Let us now leave the development of Alhambra for a time and refer to one or two families who came to the district in 1911 and 12. Mr. and Mrs. R. Reid arrived from Kincardinshire, Scotland, October 1911. Mrs. Reid had three brothers with homesteads in this neighborhood so in due course they found their way to brother Bill's shack. They had got a lift with a freighter from Pitcox. It was getting dusk when they arrived and to their horror and dismay the place was shut up and apparently no one had been around there for some time.

Here they were left in this lonely wilderness, not a neighbor's house in sight. Hungry and disgruntled, they felt homesick for Bonnie Scotland. Self-preservation, however, being the first law of life, they managed to break into the house and make the best of the situation for the night but had to go hungry to bed. Next morning a passing freighter told them that brother Bill was working in the Railway camp a few miles up the cut line. Following directions they found him and he in turn took them over to neighbor McClures where they were hospitably entertained. I have heard Mrs. Reid state with some emphasis that while they went hungry their first night in Alhambra, the mice which were thick and plentiful did not - they ate the sweat band out of Bob's new derby hat which he had purchased in Aberdeen such a short time before. Mr. and Mrs. Reid made their home with Bill for some time.

Bill Farquharson's place was now the gathering place for the Scottish boys in the neighbourhood. They had to get acquainted with the newcomers and work had got around that Mrs. Reid was a good cook and hospitably entertained. Well, these wags used to lead her an awful life and tell her some awful tall tales about how to do things in this country and she never quite knew whether they were telling the truth or not. For instance, two of them ran the bluff that they had got spring fever, the disease (so they said) that was common in this country in the spring time and the only cure was to stay in bed for a day or two. She was a bit sceptical about their trouble but sympathetic enough to take them tea and toast, which of course only aggravated the trouble and prolonged it.

Reids had got the loan of a little cow for the winter from their neighbors, McClures. In return for care and keep they got what little milk the cow might be encouraged to give. They had had plenty of experience in taking care of cows and milking them long before coming to the Alhambra District and Mrs. Reid saw to it that the cow got all the tit-bits of feed available. Along towards spring when the warm sun had melted some of the snow from around the willow bushes Griff Jones' cows found their way up to Farquharsons and came into the yard to call on Mrs. Reids' pet cow. The Reids having gone up to Rocky Mountain House had left two of the young fellows to look after the place and milk and feed the cow. Charles Smith and George Farquharson had been in the country long enough to be familiar with the unwritten law relating to stray milk cows, so they got busy and milked the cows, in fact, they had all the spare dishes and lard pails filled up when the Reids returned. Mrs. Reid, of course, wanted to know where they got all the milk, George solemnly assured her that he had milked the cow, of course. "You did not get all that milk from the cow?" "I sure did, where else would I get it? The Canadian cows give give far more milk than the Scottish breeds, the secret is in knowing how to milk them". The idea of any one stealing the milk from a neighbors cow's did not occur to her and it was a long time before she found out where the milk came from.

I have good reason to remember that July 1912 was very wet, or rather I should say that my wife has still better reason to remember about the roads and the weather at that time, for we were married in Red Deer that year on July 10th. I had arranged with Percy Byram to drive into Red Deer with his team and wagon and haul out the wedding party and their effects. Our wedding was a posh affair and could quite truthfully be described as a church wedding. We were married in the Presbyterian Church in Red Deer because the ministers children had the measles and we could not be married at the manse. Rev. W. G. Brown performed the ceremony and two local ladies kindly witnessed the contract at nine o'clock in the morning. Being anxious to get to the homestead without undue delay, we were well on our way toward Sylvan Lake in the late afternoon when one of those well



known thunder storms with torrential rains struck us. We sought shelter in an empty shack some distance from the road. In getting there however we got the team bogged down in a rotten floating culvert. Everything had to be unloaded and carried some distance before we could load up again and resume our wedding trip. My wife says it was a very bedraggled, muddy looking outfit that arrived about nine o'clock at night at the Central Alberta summer resort of Sylvan Lake.

The roads at this time were terrible and part of our load had to be left and called for later. When it was not raining and the sun shone, several hundred million mosquitoes arrived to feast on us. These pests like especially to eat up a new comer. One lady of my acquaintance, as she scratched vigorously at the lumps on her arms, wanted to know what to do for these mosquito bites. On being callously advised to scratch them she replied, "Well thats what I am doing."

Mr. and Mrs. John Leslie came to the country with the Smiths in 1912 and they experienced all the trials and tribulations of the homesteader before they became established. "Here I would like to pay a tribute to the women in the district who in those first years had to put up with so much hardship and inconvenience. Many of them had been used to a very different life amid vastly different surroundings. Enough credit has never been given these pioneer women who did so much in developing this western land. The equipment in their homes was too often meagre and crude, food supplies were uncertain, clothing would wear out and the women had to be magicians to make ends meet. Then there was the great distance from doctor or hospital when trouble loomed on the horizon. Before leaving this subject I would like to pay special tribute to this districts Florence Nightingale, Nurse (Mrs.) Elizabeth Eastman, whose name should be embossed in Gold. Many a family had good reason to be grateful for her kindly and skilful ministrations. Mr. Lessing with his knowledge of medicine rendered invaluable service to the community and many a one can remember with gratitude his help in time of trouble.

My first winter as a homesteader, in 1908, was spent in company with two brother Scots and we all stayed in Dan Sutherland's shack. We had clutted together and brought in a good grub stake but toward spring tobacco and some other necessities ran short, so my friend Donald Tolmie and myself decided to walk to Leslieville. We had heard that there was such a place about seven miles north east of us. So we plotted our course by the sections on a map and made what we called a bee line for this place. Somehow or other our calculations were out, for I remember that we ate our lunch on top of the butte where later Campbell school was built.

After seriously considering the situations, we decided that we must have passed Leslieville in our hurry without noticing it. So we veered south east a little bit and our conclusions proved correct for there was Leslieville down on the east bank of Lobstick Creek. It was a good sized frame building with a barn at the back. I believe that the storekeepers name was Bereau at that time.

We got over a lot of country on foot and we did not hesitate about walking to Emberleys, Frenchs or Stockvilles to a church service often conducted by an elderly Scotchman from the Orkney Islands, a Mr. Lisk, who had a homestead near by.

The snow did not go till near the end of April that year. The few old magazines had been read even to the advertisements. Supplies were running short and we were very glad to see running water and the bare ground again. The novelty of making our own bread and doing our own cooking had long ago worn thin. I have often thought that we would have been better fed if we had been in Fort Saskatchewan that winter but it was a wonderful experience in some respects.

There was lots of work, company and excitement in 1910-11 when the railway was under construction. The right of way to the Saskatchewan River was cleared. There was a big camp at the Horseguard Creek and another at the Saskatchewan River where the company had an office and cache at the old townsite.

Teams hauled in supplies of baled hay and supplies of all kinds, including cement for the piers of the bridge across the river. The mudwegs were corduroied with tree trunks with spruce brush on top, so it was a hive of industry until the road was completed.

The most popular and most sought after man of the Alberta Central Railway was Mr. Ed Hogg of Red Deer who was paymaster. Mr Hogg was later Mayor of the city of Red Deer. It was a very severe winter, with a lot of the teamsters and freighters could testify to, with frozen hands, feet and faces. I recall one elderly chap who we called Scottie Smith. He was engaged in hauling mail to and from Red Deer to the different camps along the line. He had rather a prominent nose which might account for the fact that it was always getting frozen. After awhile it peeled like the skin of a new potato and it always had a frozen look all winter. Indeed, he used to get quite ratty when we told him his nose was frozen.

Referring to one of the earliest settlers whom I have overlooked, Mr. Harry Weller, a young Englishman from London, England. Mr Weller was rather a delicate chap and not very well equipped physically for the rough life on a homestead. Fortunately, he had enough money to hire the heavy work done for him and managed to prove the homestead and become a registered land owner in Alberta like the rest of us.

He came to the homestead in 1906. He soon got tired of ~~hitching~~ it so he hitched up the Oxen and headed for Red Deer where he met the young lady of his choice on her arrival from England. He was reported to drive the slowest oxen in the country and they were days and days on the road. The hardships which they suffered from mesquitos and the discomforts of the trail would make a story in itself.

Mr. Weller had been having trouble with a bear that persistently raided his shack when he was absent, so he planned a way to catch the bear. He placed some bait at the bottom of a tree and arranged a rope noose for the bear to stick his head through. The rope noose hung from a branch above with a heavy weight on the end of the rope. There was a trigger arrangement so that when the bear disturbed the bait he would be caught by the neck and hanged until dead. It was quite an ingenious way to catch a thief, but what actually happened was this. The bear got caught up in the noose and finding it tighten on his neck he climbed the tree till he got above the branch on the other side, then scrambling down he chewed the rope from the drag, and went his way with a rope collar around his neck but otherwise none the worse for the adventure. It is said however, that the Wellers were not pestered any more with bears afterward.

Mr. Weller had travelled a lot and had perhaps seen the Spanish peasants in Spain milking goats but had evidently not seen anyone milk a cow. He bought himself a nice quiet cow and the first time he went to milk her, he sat down at the rear end instead of the flank which is the usual place for the operator to sit. However, some one pointed out to him the disadvantage that he might find himself in, especially in summer when the grass was green, if he persisted in milking the cow from that position.

The Wellers made a lot of friends and their neighbors were very sorry when they decided to return to England. They were heard from from time to time out after the war they were never more heard from despite the best efforts of the Municipal Authorities. Their property was eventually sold for taxes. It was thought that the whole family might have been wiped out in a bombing raid on London.

It was not easy going for any of us these first years and these people with young children were at a great disadvantage. Many of them had a hard time and suffered plenty from lack of warm clothing and proper food. Some there were who were complete misfits and were always zigging when they should have been zagging but the same could have been said truthfully of any new community in Western Canada. R. W. Service expressed it when he wrote,

"I will not be won by weaklings, subtle, suave and mild,
But by men with the hearts of vikings -
And the simple faith of a child."

The very smell of the new upturned sod was attractive and stimulating to these whose ambition and aim it was to wrest a living from mother earth. Encouraged with the prospects of two railways coming through this west country we went to work on the brush and trees to bring more land under cultivation and more comforts to our homes. The Canadian Northern Railway (sometimes called the Mackenzie and Mann) pushed through a railway from somewhere east of Blackfalds which runs west and some two miles north of our district of Alhambra.

There was a great deal of jealousy between the promoters of the two railways in their aim to reach the Brazeau coalfields first. The C.N.R. won out in the end. The men who worked for the separate companies were often quite hostile to one another and both sides were capable of pulling a fast one. The dogs however were neutral and equally friendly with both parties, as the following dog story will illustrate. There was a fine big friendly hound dog who used to make himself very much at home and did not appear to travel from the A.C.R. cook shack. He was our dog and we made public notice of our claim to him by clipping in good sized letters along his ribs "A.C.R." The next day however, we were crestfallen when we saw the letters "C.N.R." along his other side! This was the attitude of the times. It was a great mistake on the part of the Federal Government to allow two railways to be built so close together but later the Canadian Northern was merged with the Grand Trunk and became the Canadian National Railway. The Alberta Central came under the control of the Canadian Pacific Railway. Some of our settlers found employment working on the railway and some of them are growing old in the service of the company.

Our first store keeper did not stay in business very long. I don't think he could be classed as being of the enterprising type. I remember asking him for two pounds of cheese and he assured me that he could not afford to stock a whole cheese since he was quite sure he would never be able to sell it. Messers Bisset and Snarie had the store and stopping house for a time. A community hall and store underneath was built in 1920 and Mr. Chas. Raine rented the store part of the building from 1920 until 1924. That was the most prosperous period in the history of the hamlet. Mr. Emmerson took over the post office and opened a store. He and Mr. Raine bought post, props and fire wood from the settlers. Enormous quantities were shipped from here. The Hamlet was growing. With two general stores, a dry goods store, a drug store, a butchers shop, a dry ~~hotel~~, a harness shop, a pool room and a barber shop and a blacksmith shop.



A disastrous fire in 1924 cleaned out a lot of these places. Mr. Haines business practically collapsed after the fire. The common reason, he gave too much credit and got too little cash.

Mr. Sam Emmerson was now in the post, pole and prop business alone besides being a General Merchant and Post Master, a post which he held till the time of his death in 1933. Sam usually had two young girls to help in the store and post office and at times the old chap got annoyed at so many of the young fellows hanging around his place of business. He was rather deaf and some of his grievances, at least, were imaginary. The local Elevator agent went in one morning and said he wanted the market (the grain prices were phoned to the store every day) Well, Sam thought he said "Margaret" instead of market so he told the smart alec off by informing him that he could get anything in the store for him that Margaret could get. When the astonished agent grasped the situation he put his hand to the side of his mouth, leaned over the counter and shouted into Sam's ear "I DID NOT say Margaret, I said MARKET!" In spite of his infirmities Sam had a sense of humor which stood him in good stead on occasions. Here is a sample;

It was near Christmas time and the trainmen hinted to Sam that a little remembrance for the efficient way in which they had handled his goods would be quite in order. He, in good humor, informed them that he was not celebrating Christmas at that time but was keeping the feast of the passover. He used to assert that he belonged to the tribe of Ephraim and if anybody doubted it they had only to look at his nose.

Many well known family names around here can date their association with Alhambra to the period after the war, and in fact the early twenties. The Bradshaws, who had already homesteaded near Pitcey, I have often heard Mr. Bradshaw talking about hauling six hundred bushels of oats, by team, from his homestead to Red Deer in 1909, a distance of thirty-six miles.

The Scotts, the Dickson's, the Rutherfords, Farringtons, Chevallias, Catlings and many others all had a part in the development of our district.

The flu epidemic in 1918 took its heavy toll from this neighborhood too and there was an outbreak of smallpox which was alarming but not so fatal.

By 1919 the soldiers were returning from overseas. The Soldiers Settlement Board was buying land for the returned men and land values increased.

We held the Peace celebration after the great war (the war that was to end war) at the Byram farm on July 26, 1919. The celebration took the form of a picnic and sports day and was a huge success with a large attendance from the surrounding districts.

The first Dominion day picnic was held at the school grounds in 1916. The school trustees were in charge of this annual event at first. Besides a real community picnic there was a big variety of events for young and old, including horse racing, a harness race and even a "best baby" show with two bachelor farmers acting as judges. A big dance and some times fireworks at night, completed the day.

The prosperity period lasted till about 1921 when prices started to level off. The winter of 1919-20 was long and the snow was deep and it was about the middle of May before the snow finally went. Feed was very scarce. Tough wheat bundles off cars sold at Alhambra for twenty-five cents each. All the old straw stacks and straw roofs were used for feed. In the spring cattle were a good price yet but by the following fall the bottom had fallen out of the market.

The hide of an animal in the spring was worth as much as the whole carcass in the fall. I think most people will agree with me when I say that 1923 was the best crop year we ever had. The quantity and quality of the grain grown in this district has never been equaled, and it is still talked about to this day.

Here I would like to mention some of the missionaries of the different religious denominations who visited the district. The first I recall was an Anglican Clergyman, a Mr. Heaven. He may or may not have been a reliable sky pilot but he seemed to have the greatest difficulty in finding his way around in these parts. He was always taking the wrong turning and getting on the wrong trail. He used to drive a team and buggy and came near losing his life when fording the Clearwater south of Rocky Mountain House. Mr. Gorie, a young Presbyterian student came next in 1914. He also went astray on the range. He left Alhambra to go to A.L. MacDonald's place and was found late that night wandering on the open range somewhere south east of Leslieville.

After the war there was the Rev. Alexander, Mr. Joe Stone, a student. Rev. W. G. Brown used to visit the district sometimes and we were always assured of a good turnout when he was to preach. Rev. Hjonties of the Lutheran congregation was associated with this district about that time and used to conduct services at Alhambra school. The Rev. Mr. McKechnie, the blind minister who was very well known over a large track of country west of Red Deer. He used to visit the district. Handicapped as he was it was almost uncanny how he could find his way around. His cheery nature and kindness of heart will be well remembered for many a day.

There was a goodly number of Scottish people associated with this district from the earliest years. It is said of them, and perhaps with some truth, that they are a clannish race. At any rate Mr. A. L. MacDonald's place, some miles south of us, was the scene of many a New Years day party. The "Chief" (as he was called by his many friends) and his good lady were lavish and liberal in their hospitality. The Scottish

folk and many of their friends made merry there at New Years day. In fact, it was an annual event of some importance for years.

In 1912 a number of us, including my wife, walked all the way to the "Chiefs" on New Years eve. However, when we arrived there we found that we had arrived a day too soon since the party was to be held on New Years night. Oh, no, Mr. and Mrs. MacDonald would not hear of us leaving. All objections were over-ruled when the Chief furnished a saddle horse for one of the party to go back in the morning and do the necessary chores. On this occasion we celebrated for one whole day and two nights.

The Scottish people organized a Burns Club in 1921 and held their first Burns supper at Mr. Alex Rutherfords house. This was an annual event and reached considerable proportions at times, but the uncertainty and severity of the weather was a deterring factor and the Grande Finale came when one especially cold twenty-fifth the Haggis froze solid in Alhambra Hall. I might say, however, that Mr. and Mrs. Wm. Stewart at their farm home a few miles south of Rocky have kept up this annual event with great credit to themselves, for many years.

Here is a screed of rhyme which made an acceptable item on the Burns Night programme at the Stuarts some years ago. The author, Mr. Adam MacPherson will be well and favorably remembered by many of the oldtimers between Red Deer and Rocky Mountain House. I might also explain that Mr. Stuart is a cousin of Scottie MacPherson's.

TO THE BURNS CLUB

Dear Friends, I wish ye ane and a'a guid new year
The far awa.

I sure was like the nee to be
Among the crowd at Burn's spree.
Since last we met lang years ago
Wi' Andy trudged through frost and snow -
Oor freows o'course we took along,
Tae see that nothign would gae wrang.

I try the mist to picture through,
The faces therethat night I knew,
Since then the changes, wae betide,
Thae's some are scattered far awa,
Frae dear Alberta's frost and snae'.

Aft think of pleasnats hours we spent,
Lang-sine wi' dear auld frien's we kent -
There's Kerr and his, I hope that they,
Enjoy the blessings o' this day..
A better scout I never met
An' find it hard to pay such debt.

I had the pleasure there to find
Wi' twa auld freighter frien's of mine,
Oor hostess then a small bit quene,
For dear old Scotland said did pine,
Theres Reid and his - I hope their fine,
One ay could night I'm sure he'll mind.
A full fledged chestnut and a bay,
Gaed for McLaughlins fusty hay

Well Bob and I did baith agree,
It was a bittie dark to see
And . . . man when I gaed hame,
The fusty hay had changed its name.

The Farquharsons - I kent them wael,
Since ane he fair outficht the diel,
That gravel camp I still can see
The' a michanter blink my ee,
I could not sleep that night or day,
T'was there I lost the bennie gray
A Scotchman likes to see them prance,
A well fed horse he likes to dance
The fourth that year to hit the mat,
That night I just sat deen and grat.

An Scottie Smith, I hope he's there
 And his grig wife a dandy pair,
 When first I saw him haud the plow
 He tilled the land for Johnny Low -
 In Moneymust, Lor' bless yer heart
 T'was there I drave a Cadgers carit,
 Had mony a guid laugh on the green,
 With fisher wives at Aberdeen,
 Like lots of others liked their fling,
 But couldna thole the sight of string.

When poacher Stuart last I saw,
 They both were fine, but worst o' a l
 The bairns a' gone, we missed the sair,
 The hoose looked teem, perhaps less care,
 Kent every home along the Spey,
 Whare hare and patrick liked to stay,
 And every dog frae far and near
 Wad hunt wi' Willie and his gear
 Whenever chased could run I'll tell
 If cornered then could fight like a hound.

Then ther another face I saw,
 Maist times afore there was the twa,
 But that dear life-long friend of mine
 Sleeps calmly 'neath the Mountain pine,
 Just why these things are ordered so,
 Our poor frail minds will never know
 Often a little flower is given,
 It blooms on earth then called to heaven.

An then the dear auld Chief has passed,
 From earths hard knocks and wintry blast,
 Him first I met on hard stiff draw,
 Wi' white faced clyde and cayuse sma'
 The road was lang, the mud was deep
 But man, he sure could use a wheep
 And often now I think I hear
 His Heilan' tongue still in my ear,
 He had his faults, but tell me where
 We hanna got them less of mair.

Another Scot has "crossed the bar"
 MacGregor of the A.C.R.
 Goodhearted, noble, honest soul
 A life well spent has reached its goal,
 And many a well-off home today,
 Owes its first start to "right-of-way",
 From lives like these rose Scotlands fame,
 And still upholds the glorious name,
 May every Scot, no matter where,
 Preserve this sacred trust with care.

Another statesman, friends has gone,
 The Great MacDonald Scottish son,
 Great because he never trod
 Along lifes path except with God,
 That peace he preached ae'r hill and glen,
 To all the world, goodwill to men,
 Like Burns who in his day was scorned,
 And now forever shall be mourned,
 Until that morn when shadows flee
 And our eternal home shall see,
 Till then good friends I wish you cheer,
 And happiness in this new year.

Here is another poem by the same author which appeared in the Red Deer Advocate in 1925. It is relating to an Alhambra Burns Supper which was held at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Smith.

The Nicht it was a wee thing cauld;
And Scots they were in deet,
If a wee bit sneek they'd hae at hame,
Or gin they wad turn eet,
A few they choose the nappy,
But the feck they had the pith,
And headed for Alhambra
To the hame o' Scottie Smith.

Freen Kerr frae Bonnie Gallowa'
Made welcome one and a'
Bae ilka ane to help themsels
Tae everything they saw.
And what a spread! eech leeg man,
The sicht wad make ye thrive,
We ate tattie scones and oat cakes
Till our wames was like to rive,

T'was great to see auld cronies meet,
And speak of days gane by,
Of lang roads, stumps and mudholes
Where aft horse and Ox did lie.
Aft unleaded wife and bairnies,
And at times a bonnie bride
When on her maiden voyage
Frae ayent the ether side.

Some tell aboot the times they had,
Reen dear auld Glasgow cross,
At sweet Dundee or Aberdeen
And bonnie Monymess,
Where they shot Sir Arthurs Pheasants,
And the muir cock as they flew,
And gae'd oer to Lucky Larsens
For a drop o' Scotlands brew.

Ane telt aboot a tiger
That had ten feet o' a tail
And a skate frae eet the Solway
That was aught big as any whale,
And a tyke from down near Ewarts,
When called to meet his fate,
When St. Peter wasna' lookin'
Rin aff with the Golden gate.

Then Andy frae new Scotland spake
In memory of the Scot,
Who has never had no equal
And will never be forgot,
Where Scotch folk meet together,
Reen this warld's mony turns,
They'll aye mind o' Bonnie Scotland
And immortal Bobbie Burns,

The Chief wae drones in order
Gart the heilen chanier skirl,
Played the deil among the Tilers,
And around the heese did whirl,
'The tune' of Clan Mackenzie
And the strains o' 'Caberfae'
Made us wish t'would be a fortnight
To the breaking o' the day,



But the knock she gaid the faster,
And we thought it would be wise,
To pack up oor grips and scatter,
Ere the sun she wad arise,
Auld Lang Sine we a'sang oor again
Pitched to the highest note,
We'd been happy a'together
Een without a drappie oot,

Despite the discouragements of hail storms, frost and unfavourable weather the district had developed generally and there were some wonderful crops of hay, oats, wheat and barley and potatoes grown here. In 1936 my neighbor Mr. F.G. Patterson gained honour for himself and renown for the district when he won second prize for garnet wheat at Toronto Royal.

The following year John and Leonard Snade, in the Beaver Flats district a few miles north of us won first and second for oats at Toronto. This from the country out west, which was considered by many to be a no good kind of a place where it froze every night of the year.

Prosperity did not come easy to this district; the land was too hard to clear, but we got some satisfaction in taming the wilderness. A piece of new breaking was always of the utmost interest, not only to the owner but also to his neighbors. They did not withhold their praise of another's accomplishments when it was well done or curtail their criticisms when it was not.

The following story will illustrate what I mean and concerns a British bride fresh from the old country, who was getting a ride to the settlement with a dear old homesteader neighbor on a springless jolting wagon box seat. In those days the roads just meandered along the higher land and now and then a homesteader would file on land the the road crossed and use a breaking plow on the meadow through which the road wandered. In such cases the travellers just jolted across the breaking until such time as they had packed a new roadbed. Well, this British bride was having a ride over such a spot, rough, uneven farrows of a new breaking and the old homesteader was looking with a sour eye at the crooked farrows, the uneven sod, and spat contemptuously and said "bum breaking". The British bride gasped a little, then shyly said, "Well, it is as a matter of fact, but I didn't like to mention it!"

By 1928 the depression was upon us and the hungry thirties which followed will be well remembered by all but the younger generation and just for their information, here, I quote some of the prices for farm produce at that time. Hogs, live weight, four cents a pound. Cattle proportionately low. Cream eleven cents a pound butterfat. Wheat down to twenty-five cents a bushel, oats - four cents, eggs - four cents a dozen. Wool - four cents a pound. The depression was attributed to over-production. Here is a story of a city dweller who visited a farmer friend in the depression period. On seeing so much surplus feed stuff around the farm he could not refrain from comparing his life with the farmers and he told the farmer how well off he was with all this stuff to eat compared to himself. The farmer looked at the city man in his smart new suit, comparing the latest city styles with his own worn out, torn and patched overalls, answered him thus:

"Well now, you just come back next spring and you'll see the fattest, raggedest farmer you ever saw in all your life"

Now while I will be interested in the fortunes of Alhambra district as long as I live I do not propose to follow it any further on paper.

In looking backward over the years from 1952 to 1900 when I revised the history which was written in 1928, I think of the many changes which have taken place since the first settler filed on sec. 4-39-5-5. Modern ways and modern means have made rapid development possible and now we live in an age of speed and comfort if not security.

Some of us oldtimers often wonder how the business of the country could be carried on thirty, forty or fifty years ago when the homesteaders took over from the Indians. I have talked with many people who, like myself, got a great pleasure in recalling the early days when there was thrill and adventure in homesteading in the wild west. Yes, there was something fascinating about it which I can't describe.

I have one good friend who agrees with me in these sentiments and said, "Yes, by George, I enjoyed doing it and if I had the chance I'd do it again."

Where are these oldtimers now? Some like myself have retired to live elsewhere. One of the very first settlers, P. Byram, now lives in Victoria, B.C. Some who were connected with the district in the early years are now scattered far and wide and a note of sadness creeps in when I think of the many grand old neighbors who have crossed over the other side. We will see them no more but they builded better than they know. Before closing I would like to record the names of some of the old timers as they occur to me, who may be found in the neighborhood, and the names of old time families in the neighborhood.

115th
OF ALBERTA



At or around the hamlet you might see in the year 1952:

William Farquharson and his brother Charlie. Mr. and Mrs. Jack Pellit, Mrs. M.E. Lessing, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Patterson, Mr. Robert Smith, Mr. and Mrs. A. Reynar, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Maxwell, Mrs. John Olsen, Mrs. P.C. Petersen, Mr. Henry Lund, Mr. Sam Dickson, Mrs. A.L. MacDonald who pioneered it in Manitoba long before coming to Alberta in 1910. Mr. John Cochrane and his brother Jim, also Mr. and Mrs. Wm. Cochrane, and Mr. and Mrs. Martin Lund. Lunds, Olsens, Van Hellen, McDonald, have all been prominent in developing the district. Others I would like to mention, Mr. and Mrs. Fred Mushka. Mr. Mushka has been section foreman since 1918. No doubt I have forgotten some who will deserve to be mentioned but believe me, I do not do so intentionally. Well so long. We'll be seeing you.

THE END

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